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HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year

1950

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

District Medical Officer of Health (and Divisional Medical Officer for North Herts Area):

VICTOR R. WALKER, M.B., Ch.B., B.Sc., D.P.H.

Divisional Health Officer,
12 Brand Street, Hitchin.
(Telephone: Hitchin 107)

Senior Sanitary Inspector:
SAMUEL T. GUNNING, Cert. S.I.E.B., F.S.I.A.

Additional Inspector:
ROBERT B. BOLT, Cert. S.I.E.J.B., M.S.I.A.

Council Offices,
21, Bancroft, Hitchin.
(Phone: Hitchin 1112-5)

Wm. E. POTTER, Clerk to the Council.

To the Chairman and Members of the Hitchin Rural District Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present the annual report for the year 1950 upon the health and sanitary conditions of your district on the direction of Ministry of Health Circular 112/50.

Despite some loading of the older age groups of your population the local death rate (10.8) is this year more favourable than the national rate (11.6) and the local birth rate (15.1) approximate to that for England and Wales (15.8). Local still-birth and infant mortality rates are very favourable and the incidence of serious infectious disease has continued low.

The main local public health problem continues to be housing, which includes the problem of increasing disrepair of older properties.

I would again acknowledge having received from your Council and its Chief Officers the utmost consideration and help during the year, and in the compilation of this report the great assistance of your former Senior Sanitary Inspector, Mr. S.T.Gunning, before his recent well earned retirement.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

VICTOR R. WALKER

District Medical Officer of Health.

July 1951

LOCAL STATISTICS

Area (in acres)	82,559
Home Population - Registrar General's estimate for mid-1950	21,680
Number of inhabited houses at 1st April 1951 (est.)	6,592
Rateable Value - 1st April 1951	£103, 010
Sum represented by Penny Rate (estimate 1951/2)	£414

Extracts from Vital Statistics for the Year 1950

	Totals	Male	Female	HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT	Comparable Rates for England and Wales
LIVE BIRTHS					
Legitimate	312	151	161		
Illegitimate	16	8	8		
All	328	159	169		
Rate per 1,000 of the est. resident population				15.1	15.8
STILLBIRTHS:					
Legitimate	3	2	1		
Illegitimate	-	-	-		
All	3	2	1		
Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births				9	23
DEATHS:	238	116	122		
Rate per 1,000 of the est. resident population				10.8	11.6
DEATH RATES OF INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE					
All infants per 1,000 live births				21	30

Actual number of deaths (a) under 4 weeks and (b) totals under 1 year	(a) under 4 weeks	(b) totals under 1 year
Legitimate	2	7
Illegitimate	-	-
All	2	7

Deaths from Puerperal Causes	-
Deaths from Cancer (all sites)	34
Deaths from Measles	-
Deaths from Whooping Cough	-
Deaths from other infective and parasitic diseases	-

~~SECTION A~~

Comment on Vital Statistics

The estimate of "home" population for the mid year shows a rise of 170 on the figures for "civilian" population in mid-1949.

The birth rate of 15.1 shows considerable reduction on the unexpectedly high rate (17.4) for 1949. The local death rate (10.8) is more favourable than both that for 1949 (11.7) and the national figure for 1950 (11.6)

Still-birth and infant mortality rates were very favourable and, apart from tuberculosis, there were no deaths from infectious disease.

Principal causes of Death

Of the total of 238 deaths, 84 were attributed to Heart and other Circulatory Diseases, 33 to Vascular Lesions of the Nervous System, 34 to Cancer (all sites), 14 to Respiratory Diseases, and 7 to Motor Vehicle accidents; the last figure shows a disquieting increase and may reflect a relatively increasing risk occasioned by rural residence.

SECTION B

General Provision of Health Services

There was no important change during the year.

SECTION C

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Water Supplies

The first reaction on considering the question of water supplies for the area is one of relief, in that there has been no shortage of water in any part of the district during the year, while the present position at the Council's boreholes and wells throughout the district is not unsatisfactory. The Ashwell supply which gave rise to much anxiety last year has made a remarkable recovery, following works carried out at the well on the advice of your Engineer & Surveyor.

The long awaited mains extension to supply the Parish of Hexton and to improve the supply at Pirton and Holwell was in hand at the close of the year and has since made good progress. Other mains extensions await deliveries of pipes and the availability of labour.

A careful watch on the purity of the water supplied has been maintained, both at the pumping stations and at points of delivery throughout the district.

Two tables of analysis are submitted -

I. Taken by the Council's Engineer & Surveyor to test the quality of the water delivered from the pumping stations into the mains.

II. Taken by the Public Health Department to test the quality of the water delivered to the consumer.

Table I

Pumping Station	Total	Raw Water		Treated Water	
		Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Ashwell	9	5	3	1	-
Codicote	4	3	1	-	-
King's Walden	10	5	-	5	-
Peter's Green	9	3	4	1	1
Wymondley	4	3	1	-	-
Braughing	No record of any samples				
Totals	36	19	9	7	1

TABLE II

		No. taken	Satis-factory	Unsatis-factory	Doubt-ful
1.	Council Undertakings				
	Offley-Lilley scheme	71	54	11	6
	Hitchin-Braughing	59	44	6	9
	Ashwell	10	9	-	1
	Codicote	14	14	-	-
	Wymondley	11	11	-	-
	Peter's Green	2	2	-	-
2.	Private Undertakings				
	Knebworth	15	15	-	-
	Bygrave	1	1	-	-
	Newnham (Mr. Farr's supply)	2	-	2	-
3.	Bulk Supplies				
	Hitchin U.D. (Ickleford)	26	21	5	-
	Stevenage U.D. (Graveley and Todd's Green)	10	9	-	1
	Hertford R.D. (Shephall)	5	5	-	-
4.	Other Sources				
	Hexton Pump	5	-	5	-
	Langley	3	1	2	-
	Radwell	1	1	-	-
	Newnham (Council Cottages)	1	1	-	-
	Graveley Pump	1	1	-	-
	Special samples (private sups.)	6	3	2	1
		243	192	33	18

Sewers and Sewage Disposal

It is somewhat disappointing to have to record that no visible progress has been made in connection with the various schemes referred to in my last report for the provision of sewers and sewage disposal schemes in the various parts of the district. While one may be well aware of the protracted negotiations entailed in the preparation and approval of such schemes, the ratepayers' measure of progress is limited to the actual work in hand, and that for the period under review is - Nil.

The small village and Housing Scheme Treatment Plants referred to in my last report are working satisfactorily, thanks to the ready and close co-operation of the Council's Officials.

Public Cleansing Service

Refuse Collection

This service continues to operate with a marked degree of regularity and efficiency, which reflects credit on the foreman and the outside staff.

At the close of the year under review, work had commenced on the provision of a Central Depot at Gosmore Ley, which when completed will make the supervision of this service more effective, and should show a saving in non-productive operational time which will be available to set against the constantly increasing collection factor.

The figures for the last three years show a steady increase -

	No. of loads	Approx. weight of all materials collected	Vehicle mileage
1948	1671	3554 tons	28148
1949	1729	4545 "	38699 (foreman's van introduced)
1950	1835	4674 "	44327

Disposal of the collected refuse is by controlled system on eight tips. An option on two additional suitable sites has been secured, and Town Planning Clearance for the use of the land for this purpose obtained.

Cesspool and Night-soil Emptying

A study of the figures of this service for the last three years will clearly indicate that the capacity for further extension is now non-existent until the present vehicle capacity is increased.

Number of cesspools emptied at -

	Houses in private ownership		Council Houses		Loads from Sewage works	Pails emptied
	Free	Chargeable	Free	Chargeable		
1948	287	78	27	82	339	476 (half yr.)
1949	308	126	32	206 (inc.148 at Hinx.)	329	2641
1950	395	201	25	59	409	3765 *

* In addition to this figure, 434 pails were emptied in two days during the County Agricultural Show held in the district in May.

Salvage

There was a continued decline in the return of salvageable material during the year, as shown by the figures in comparison with previous years, viz.,

1948	-	64 tons collected	-	income	£269. 7. 0d.
1949	-	53¾ " "	-	"	£180. 2. 6d.
1950	-	39 " "	-	"	£131. 6. 2d.

Towards the end of the year there was an undoubted upward tendency in both quantity of salvage collected and price obtainable.

A bonus scheme for the men was put into operation during the last three months of the year, which offered a 50/50 division of all collections over ten tons per quarter.

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act

Extracts from the report submitted to the Authorities in the Joint Scheme show that some useful work was done in the area of this Scheme, under the control of the Senior Sanitary Inspector of the H.R.D.C.

This is the first full year of the operation of the scheme, which gives a measure of the amount of work entailed.

It was found that with one operator only it was not possible to undertake Block Inspections to the extent necessary to reduce the rat population in the more heavily infested areas.

HITCHIN AND WELWYN RURAL AND ROYSTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCILS
JOINT PESTS CONTROL SCHEME

SUMMARY

JANUARY 1st to DECEMBER 31st 1950

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED						NO. OF RATS AND/OR MICE PICKED UP	
	SEWERS	REFUSE TIPS ETC.	PRIVATE DWELLINGS	BUSINESS PREMISES	BLOCK INSPECTION	TOTAL	R.	M
HITCHIN R.D.C.	56	400¾	540¾	85½	17½	1100½	1533	129
WELWYN R.D.C.	24½	111	131¾	39¾	1	308	573	58
ROYSTON U.D.C.	22	97½	143	38½	-	301	463	23
	102½	609¼	815½	163¾	18½	1709½	2569	210

Other figures - Total mileage covered by vehicle - 8233
Petrol used - 275 gals.
Approx. m.p.g. - 29.94

Total time spent on mixing bait, vehicle maintenance etc. 399½

Total hours worked - 2109

Sanitary Inspection of the Area

Analysis of the number of inspections carried out by your two Inspectors again shows that a considerable volume of work is handled with a minimum of Statutory Notices.

The number of inspections for all purposes was 2,752 detailed as follows:-

For defects under the Housing Acts	387
For defects under the Factory Acts	25
For the prevention of Infectious diseases	32
As to the sanitary condition of Schools and Public Halls	15
Inspections under the Milk & Dairies Order	116
Inspections of Slaughter-houses, butchers' shops etc.	71
For the prevention of Nuisances	438
Inspections of drainage, conversions etc.	241
Inspections of water supplies and sampling	218
Supervision of Refuse Collection and Salvage Disposal	547
Inspections re Rats and Mice destruction (supervision)	164
Inspections under Shops Acts 1934	61
Miscellaneous Inspections	195
Inspections of Moveable Dwellings	169
Food & Drugs Act (inc. Ice-cream supervision)	73
	2752

Two Abatement Notices were served during the year, and for this one Nuisance Notice was obtained, following which the work necessitating the repair of a very defective roof, was carried out by the Council in default.

SECTION D

Housing

In this field of the Council's many activities it would appear that the need for continued effort is as great as ever. The list of applications for accommodation in December 1950 stood at 1149, and that after constant and careful review whereby only the names of applicants residing or working in the district or having any other definite connection with the district, remain on the list.

The figures for the year ended 31st December 1950 are as follows:-

No. of new permanent dwellings completed by the Council	47
No. of new permanent dwellings completed by Private Enterprise (under licence)....	11
Total	58

Housing - Reconditioning

Some useful re-conditioning work was carried out by private owners, under licence, during the year, affecting some 31 dwellings. No grants under the Improvements sections of the Housing Act 1949 have yet been approved.

In addition to the re-conditioning work referred to above, sanitary improvements have been carried out at a number of premises during the year.

SECTION E

Inspection and Supervision of Food

The outstanding feature of the year in relation to the supervision of food supplies was the approval by the Ministry of Food of Bye-Laws with respect to the handling, wrapping and delivery of food, and the sale of food in the open air. These, together with the effective publicity campaign of the Ministry, have had a beneficial effect on this aspect of your Inspectors' work.

Every effort should be made to secure compliance with these bye-laws in and about all food premises, including travelling food vans.

a. Milk. The Council's responsibility with respect to the distribution of milk is not lost sight of, and the results of samples taken in the area are given herewith -

Summary of Milk Samples taken during 1950 -

Sampling Authority	Designated and School milks		Non-designated milks		Tubercule Bacilli		
	Satisfied	Failed	Satisfied	Failed	Pos.	Neg.	No Result
Herts. County Council	55	6	-	-	-	-	-
Other Authorities	37	2	4	2	-	-	-
Hitchin Rural Dist. Council	6	4	-	-	-	2	-
TOTAL	98	12	4	2	-	2	-

Total number of Samples - 116

Number of Brucella Abortus Cultures positive - 3

b. Inspection of Meat and Other Foods

Frequent inspections of butchers' shops and meat stores were made, while complaints from retailers relating to meat delivered to them are dealt with in close liaison with the Inspectors working at the Government controlled slaughter-house at Letchworth.

The amount of foodstuff condemned as unsound and unfit during the year was as follows:-

	Cwts.	Qrts.	Lbs.
Tinned Food	1	-	6
Eggs	1	-	-
Cheese	-	-	2
Fish	-	-	-
Meat	3	3	2
Cereals	-	2	26
Dried Fruit	-	3	26
Total	7	2	6

c. Food Poisoning Outbreaks

Two instances of suspected food poisoning were investigated during the year, and the source in one case was believed to be a home-made meat pie following re-heating, and in the second pressed pork purchased locally.

d. Factories Act 1937

An abstract from the Report submitted to the Ministry of Labour and National Service on Form 572 is given herewith.

In one case where serious defects were reported, the inspector discovered that an old disused motor garage was being used for the manufacture of off-ration chocolate sweetmeats.

Immediate informal action resulted in the operations being suspended and the premises closed.

Factories Acts 1937 and 1948

1. Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors)

Premises	No. on Register	Number of –		
		Inspections	Written notices	Occupiers prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Secs. 1,2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced	39	7	2	Nil
(ii) Factories not inc. in (i) in which Sec. 7 is enforced by the Local Auth.	51	18	–	"
(iii) Other prems. in which Sec. 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excl. Outworkers)	–	–	–	"
Total	90	25	2	–

2. Cases in which Defects were found

Particulars	No. of cases in which defects found				No. of prosec-utions
	Found	Remedied	To H.M. Inspec.	By H.M. Inspec.	
Want of cleanliness	1	Factory closed	Nil	Nil	Nil
Overcrowding			"	"	"
Unreasonable temp.		"	"	"	"
Inadequate ventil.	1	"	"	"	"
Ineffective drainage of floors	1	"	"	"	"
Sanitary conveniences					
(a) Insufficient	1	"	"	"	"
(b) Unsuitable or defective	2	2	"	2	"
(c) Not sep. for sexes	1	Factory closed	"	Nil	"
Other offences against the Act	Nil	"	"	"	"
Total	7	2	-	2	-

Outworkers. There are 17 outworkers reported in the district.

SECTION F

Prevalence of and Control over, Infectious and other Diseases

During the year local notifications of infectious diseases (after correction of diagnosis) were:- Measles 152, scarlet fever 18, whooping cough 10, acute pneumonia 4, erysipelas 2, acute poliomyelitis 2, and food poisoning 7. Measles was semi-epidemic in the western half of the district during the late spring and early summer.

Scarlet Fever was very scattered in distribution and sporadic throughout the year (quarterly occurrence 5, 7, 1 and 5). In distribution it was completely confined to young school or pre-school children and in severity continued exceedingly mild.

Diphtheria was again completely absent throughout the area. Despite the continued absence, the response of parents to the offer of protection by immunisation continues good.

Poliomyelitis was confined to two young children in the Knebworth area in the late autumn. One was non-paralytic but late follow-up of the other reports mild residual partial paralysis of one limb.

Food Poisoning. Of the 7 notified cases of food poisoning, two arose from a home prepared steak and kidney pie, while 4 formed part of a scattered outbreak caused by prepared meat (pressed pork) sold from an establishment in an adjoining urban district. In the single remaining case both the diagnosis and the cause were uncertain.

TUBERCULOSIS

New Cases and Deaths during the year

Age Periods	New Cases: Respiratory M	New Cases: Respiratory F	New Cases: Non-Respiratory M	New Cases: Non-Respiratory F	Deaths: Respiratory M	Deaths: Respiratory F	Deaths: Non-Respiratory M	Deaths: Non-Respiratory F
0 - 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 - 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 - 15	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
15 - 25	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
25 - 35	2	4	-	-	-	1	-	-
35 - 45	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
45 - 55	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
55 - 65	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
and over	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	9	8	1	-	-	1	-	-
Deaths allocated by the Registrar-General after final transfers ...					1	1	1	-

Total notifications of respiratory cases are about the same as for 1949, but there is some reduction in non-respiratory notifications. The total of deaths finally allocated to the district (3) is considerably lower than the figure of 6 in 1949.

VICTOR R. WALKER
District Medical Officer
of Health.

July 1951.